

Backgrounder: ECHO (Emergency Care Help Organization)

ECHO was founded in 1981 by a group of Tallahassee churches and concerned citizens who realized a need for a central location to help individuals and families in crisis. Having served the Tallahassee and Leon County community for 22 years, ECHO is one of the largest outreach efforts in the community, providing food, clothing, housing, emergency financial assistance, employment assistance and much more. ECHO has three main divisions: Emergency Services, Employment Services and Homeless Family Services.

More than 4,000 people visit ECHO's Emergency Services Division each year. Individuals seeking assistance are interviewed by a counselor to assess the crisis and determine what help is needed. For example, an emergency utility or rent payment may be made to keep a family in their home while waiting for the next paycheck to arrive.

In response to the need for employment assistance, ECHO added Jubilee Job-Link (JJ-L) in 1999. Their goal is to assist those in need in finding, and keeping, employment. Jubilee Job-Link prepares eager, capable job applicants to meet the needs of Tallahassee employers, and continues to coach and mentor those newly employed for up to a year.

In August 2001, ECHO opened Bethany Family Apartments, providing emergency and short-term shelter for families in a housing crisis. Bethany Family Apartments gives shelter to an average of 48 families a year, as well as food, clothing, case management, and other assistance geared to help families become self-sufficient and attain permanent housing. Children (from newborn to 17 years) make up the largest population at Bethany.

ECHO's mission is to exemplify faith in action by providing holistic services designed to promote self-sufficiency and empowerment of people in crisis and those living under the burden of poverty. For more information about ECHO, contact Trudy Barnum at 878-6088, or email her at echo@nettally.com.

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